Language policy in the virtual space

Habibova K.A.
I. Nasimi Linguistics Institute
Of Azerbaijan National Science Academy
Azerbaijan, Baku
konul_habibova@mail.ru

Jafarov Y.M.
IT Institute
Of Azerbaijan National Science Academy
Azerbaijan, Baku
yedgar.jafarov@ibar.az

Abstract — **The article observes the purpose, role and main means of language policy in the virtual space. The research in this work bases on descriptive and comparative methods. This work states that the presence of many languages in a single virtual-communicative field gives rise to cross-language conflicts in the Internet space. On the background of this conflict situation the analysis of language policy in the virtual space determines the scientific significance and novelty of this study. The article also considers the phenomenon of the globalization of language means, which plays an important role in the modern communicative space. It also analyzes the social stratification of languages in the virtual space. It is emphasized that the virtual space creates conditions for the sustainable existence of languages, ensures the realization of their communicative potential. Using the Internet as the main channel for exchanging information, spreading and summarizing the global communication community in a single center, globalization leads to the dominant role of some languages and the lowering of the social status of others. When summing up, the authors note that despite the fact that the Internet has turned into a field of interlingual conflicts, the dominant language that serves the global level of communication does not encroach on the usual areas of functioning of local languages.**

Keywords — *language policy, virtual space, globalization, local languages, cross-language conflicts, Internet.*

I. INTRODUCTION

The basis of virtual communication is virtual text (discourse). In this communicative situation, the text immersed into virtual reality is a special model of modern communication. Virtual discourse manifests itself on the basis of information technologies and is realized through the interaction of communicative images. Sociolinguistics defines all text types used in Internet space as virtual discourse.

Peculiarity of language policy in virtual discourse is largely determined by the specialities of virtual functioning of the language. This fact determines its diversity in the Internet space. Being one of the most democratic communication channels, the Internet once again refutes the notion that "the degree of democracy... is inversely proportional to the degree of stringency of language policy" [1]. Despite the fact that there is no censorship in the virtual space, this fact is not a guarantee of favorable conditions for language functioning. The presence of many languages in a single virtual-communicative field is the cause of cross-language conflicts, as a result of which particular means of communication is chosen among many. The basis of this process is the globalization of language tools in the virtual space.

This study will be the first one to consider the role and main means of language policy in the virtual space, based on descriptive and comparative methods of linguistics. The goal of this work is to review and analyze language policy in the virtual space from the point of view of globalization and social stratification of languages in the Internet space.

New communication channels (Internet, cellular communication, etc.) do not depend on the geographical factor and fundamentally change the essence of verbal communication. Speaking about the geographical factor, we mean the possibility of establishing contact and communication (of course, if there is a communication channel) regardless of the distance and almost in real time.

What is happening with languages in the Internet space is not a mirror reflection of globalization of the market, of a single global economic space. In fact, from a linguistic point of view, such a complex procedure is manifested in the form of redistribution between the dominant languages of communicative and practical spheres. We can observe similar things within a single language in the distribution of language resources between several modes of functioning, which in turn correspond to various spheres of human activity (politics, science, everyday communication, art, etc.). Thus, the formed stylistic system marks the level of multidimensionality and the development of the functioning of this language as a means of Internet communication. As a political factor in the language of the virtual space, the dividing lines pass not inside one language, but between languages. As a result, interlanguage relations of mutual functional complementarity appear (additional distributions).

Taking into account these facts, it should be noted that there is a need for research and development of relevant research projects in the field of managing the information environment, adapting the behavior of a virtual personality to social norms, eliminating existing problems in virtual reality, managing the information space, as well as language policy in a virtual space.

II. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Since this study examines the status of language policy in the virtual space, the main method of research is the descriptive method. Taking into account the fact that virtual space is multifaceted and almost all languages of the world participate in it, we will also rely on the comparative descriptive method in the course of the research.

A. Social stratification of verbal-communicative space

Internet users maintain their virtual identity with the help of texts that they place in the virtual space. For example, any user of a social network wants to tell about themselves, their interests, thoughts, feelings, etc. With the emergence of new areas of human communication, globalization is forcing the actively functioning languages to master the types of communicative forms that have a predominantly virtual

implementation. Given this fact, it should be noted that the following social stratification is observed in the communicative space: 1) intra-ethnic (ordinary intra-state) level of communication; 2) inter-ethnic (intra- or interstate) level of communication; 3) global (international) level of communication [3, p. 64]. In real sociolinguistic practice, there are cases when the same language operates at all three levels (for example, in the UK). But the functioning of several languages is also possible. A similar situation is observed in some autonomous republics of the Russian Federation, in particular in Mordovia, where three languages are used: Mordovian, Russian and English. Linguistic relationships in New Guinea are built in a similar way: inter-ethnic communication is carried out in a local language, official business uses Melanesian and Indonesian; international communications are done in English [12].

Speaking about the virtual space of verbal communication, obviously, it is necessary to correct the terminology used, which is, undoubtedly, geo-oriented (i.e., implicitly implying the spatial proximity/remoteness of the subjects of communication), and define the first level as mono-ethnic and the second one bi/polyethnic. At the mono-ethnic level, there is a virtual communication between representatives of one ethnos, speakers of a single language; multi-ethnic level contacts are made between representatives of different ethnic groups who speak different languages. According to N. Mechkovskaya, "formation of a separate ethnic community (tribe, nationality) is associated with the linguistic association of the population of a certain territory. The common language, along with the common territory, economic life, well-known common culture and ethnic identity, is an essential feature of the ethnos" [6, p. 90]. And although in practice the correlation between ethnos and language is more complex, this assumption may be used to clarify the level division.

At the moment there is only one contender for the role of the global communication language - Global English. As D. Crystal notes, the emergence of this phenomenon was due to a number of historical, geographical and sociocultural reasons, and the political and military power of the nation (or rather, the state) native English speakers (first UK and then US) was decisive [11, p . 7].

Three main factors contribute to the success of Global English in real communication: an unusually high number of native speakers of English (we remind that English serves as an official or semi-official language in the territory of all former British colonies), its product image (knowing English language opens up wide opportunities for studying, business, international career, and traveling. Thus, the language turns into a commodity and, thanks to its valuable consumer qualities, is quite successfully sold), as well as Latin graphics, facilitating promotion in the "language market". "In the conditions of competition for the consumer in the delivery of information, with its catastrophic glut, an obvious advantage will be given to the edition that offers the most adequate form of the text as the final product" [5, p.51].

As early as the mid-1990s, the Internet, reflecting an objective sociolinguistic situation, was 80% full of English-language sites (in 1996, 40 out of 50 million Internet users accessed the latter).

The transformation of slang and jargons (slang, which are mainly English-language borrowings) of commonly used elements among Internet users, and also against this background, the revival of the epistolary style in the form of electronic correspondence, the simplest and most concise expression of thoughts, is one of the innovations that virtual reality has brought into the language environment. Thus, the playful nature of the virtual space enhances the way of speaking in Internet communication. You can find content that resembles this manner of communication even on the most serious sites. From this point of view, we can talk about the manifestation of a completely new functional style in the language, which can be called the Internet style. This style of communication on the Internet gradually affects the speech culture of people in real life. This means that through the virtual sphere, the English language is spread all over the world and other languages, regardless of distance and interrelations of nations, are filled with new English-language terms and words of common usage.

B. Languages in virtual space

Today, the language is not only a means of communication, it also performs the mission of creating virtual reality. Artificial languages are being created today for technical purposes. Virtual reality has a very serious impact on the development of national languages. At the same time, the virtual space itself is one of the main sources of enrichment of the modern national languages of the world. For example, today in England, in cases when it is impossible to find equivalents for certain Internet terms, terminology experts try to replace them with appropriate words from the Weblish functional style lexicon (short form for Web + English) [2].

The "brand identity" of the language manifests itself specifically on the Internet, often taking unexpected forms. A forgotten and almost defunct language can become popular and actively functioning. The increased interest in obtaining "education in a historical language that has lost communicative functions (from the point of view of ordinary language practice) but preserved the identificational ones," is indicated by I. Semenenko [7, p. 100].

For example, the virtual popularity of the Breton language, which for a long time has been expelled from everywhere, including schools and government agencies, is significant. It is also interesting to observe how Esperanto [15] is conquering the world wide web, quite effectively competing with natural languages in the virtual space.

The Internet put an end to the unwritten existence of languages, since only sign-based systems can function graphically (visually) on the Web. Voice and video modes, as well as other sign systems, perform a replacement function, and they are, in fact, secondary. As a result, the problem of fonts arose, because the availability of a graphic presentation of a language on the web depends on their presence. So, more recently, Cyrillic fonts were absent abroad, and therefore, in correspondence by email in Russian, you had to use Latin graphics (the so-called phonetic writing).

Currently, this problem is being resolved. We already know several successful attempts of a written representation of national languages, including minority. Standards were developed for creating new alphabets (this refers to alphabets resulting from the transition of a number of nations of the former USSR to the Latin alphabet), which makes the virtual graphical software for any language theoretically possible. But despite overcoming technological obstacles for presentation of languages associated with national alphabets on the Internet, the existing techniques are still very cumbersome and hardly accessible to the average user [8]. For example, there are computer fonts of the Mari language, but in order to read the text in Mari, the user must download these fonts from the

server, install them on their computer, set up appropriate programs, etc. Therefore, the author of computer Kazakh Latin ("Kaznovitsa") A. Sergeev is right when he links the underdevelopment of the Kazakh language on the Internet with the absence of an "acceptable standard of Kazakh drivers" [9].

It is important to emphasize that the virtual space creates conditions for the sustainable existence of languages, ensuring the realization of their communicative potential. The Internet allows to satisfy all five basic needs that stabilize the functioning of languages: energy (language can be used in different spheres of human activity); transport (transmission and dissemination of information in the language); the need for security (preservation and, partially, the protection of the language); production (the ability to get an unlimited number of texts in the language); informational (ability to express and perceive new knowledge).

New language trends in the virtual space are gradually spreading on business documents, and thereby strengthen democracy in this area. Keeping correspondence in an online format facilitates business correspondence within office standards. There are many reasons for engaging people in virtual communication. The lack of communication, sources of information in real life, generates virtual communication in the first place. To ensure that the language is fully reproduced on the network, in addition to purely informational sites, virtual libraries, training sites and chat rooms are created. These Internet resources, in fact, perform the same functions as real libraries, educational institutions, and everyday communication. In addition, a large number of sites appeared on the World Wide Web, offering services for the translation of electronic resources into non-original natural languages. For example, the company "Any Language.com" translates and adapts texts in accordance with the value system of the recipient country, including changes in graphic design. The list of languages into which translation is proposed is of interest, as well as the order of their location in the list: "If you want to place your website in a truly international environment, we suggest you to have electronic versions of websites, or at least their most important pages, in English, Japanese, German, Spanish, French." This is followed by "Danish, Finnish, other Scandinavian languages" as languages of countries where "the online population is large enough" [14].

"Modern media space changes the characteristics of communication greatly: temporal, spatial, language frameworks are erased" [4, p. 363]. At the same time, a language can live without functioning in virtual space, i.e. not serving the communication, which contradicts the nature of the language. The "physical" presence, in other words, a linguistic description of a language is enough for it to materialize itself on the Web. This phenomenon allows to talk about the "virtual" existence of languages on the Internet: no one speaks the language, it almost went into the category of the dead language, however, when being present on the Internet, it turns into a communicative system ready for action expecting the communication participants.

C. Global lingualism on the Internet

The Internet, which was originally a zone of free choice of language for communication, however, demonstrates a significant degree of conflict of language coexistence on the Web. Adoption of the dominant position of the English language in a globalizing world is something akin to the spread of literacy in Europe several centuries ago. In the 18th century only 30-40% of Europeans could read and write, in the

middle of the 19th century literacy became the most important requirement for admission to work, and in the 20th century, an illiterate person turned into a pariah.

Having chosen English as a global language, history has doomed monolingualism to the role of "illiteracy" of the 21st century. If current trends continue, then in the near future a monolingual world will replace a world where everyone knows their own national language and the time of global lingualism will come where knowledge of the standard global language cannot be avoided. Despite some attempts to resist the emerging linguistic situation, modern Europe demonstrates many examples of global lingualism. In Paris, for example, a German bank requires its employees to be fluent in English, since this language is the corporate language of international business. It is significant that English is considered the official language of the European Central Bank, although the UK is not a part of the European Monetary Union, the ECB itself is located in Frankfurt and only 10% of the banking staff are English speaking [13].

Addressing to the level division of real communication (intra-ethnic, inter-ethnic and global levels), we find explicitly pronounced correlations between the communicative level and the corresponding type of linguistic situation. At the intra-ethnic level, monolingualism dominates, serving all areas of communication of the united ethnic group, but only within this group. For the inter-ethnic level, involving contacts between representatives of two or more linguistic communities, bi-and/or multilingualism is distinguishing. At the level of global (international) communication, there is an urgent need for Global English, and global lingualism is established. Undoubtedly, all three types of linguistic situation are represented on the Internet. Mono-ethnic communication is provided within monolingualism, bi/multi-ethnic is realized through bi/multilingualism, and global lingualism arises at the level of international communications.

Using the Internet as the main channel for exchanging information, spreading and summarizing the global communication community in a single center, globalization leads to the dominant role of some languages and the lowering of the social status of others. Despite the growing interest in national languages in some regions, the tendency towards linguistic assimilation of "minor" languages, especially in the information sphere, is gaining momentum. As a result, regional and indigenous languages are facing the threat of extinction, which worries not only their speakers, but also linguists.

Theoretically, there is no discrimination of languages on the Internet: virtual space is multilingual and the choice of language depends on the direction of communication, the actual referent (theme, topic) and the communicative intent of the speaker. However, in practice, the quantitative indicators of the "involved" languages in Internet communication differ notoriously. According to statistics, the most widely used languages on the web are English, Chinese, Japanese, Spanish, German, French, Korean, Italian, Portuguese and Danish. They occupy 87.2% of the virtual language space, while the rest is for only 12.8%.

Will Global English maintain its position in the field of global communication (as well as on the Internet)? Opinions of experts on this subject diverge. M. Bragg claims that in 50 years "about 1.3 billion people will use English as the first or second language" [10]. D. Graddol, who believes that by 2050, the influence of such languages as Chinese, Hindi, Urdu, Spanish and Arabic will sharply increase, is in the opposite

position. The latter assessment is supported by the fact that the share of resources in other languages, primarily in Chinese, is steadily growing on the Internet.

According to the forecasts of "The New York Times" in the near future, people in the virtual space will communicate with pictographic symbols or only visually [16]. Instead of traditional texts in electronic-written messages, images, symbols, ideographic and pictographic symbols will be used, which will convey information about the emotional state of communicators. This trend may be seen today in the communicative acts implemented through social-virtual channels like Instagram, Vine, Tumblr, etc. With the further evolution of technology, this trend will intensify.

III. CONCLUSIONS

Summarizing the above, it can be stated that a prior conflict of linguistic existence in virtual space does not lead to the so-called linguicide. This allows non-global languages to operate successfully, and also revive gradually.

Global English serving the global level of communication, does not encroach on the usual areas of functioning of local languages. Of course, the Internet as an area of interaction of languages became a field of interlingual conflicts.

With the coexistence of languages, the evolution of virtual space is a natural process that opens up many interesting and diverse opportunities for researchers to observe the living and dynamic changes in the world language situation and the map as a whole.

The phenomenon of virtual communication in many aspects negatively affects the literary language. The vocabulary of the Internet user, as well as their speech errors in virtual communication, become the standard for other users, thus infecting one and the other, which may lead to primitivization of language and thinking. Language primitiveness is a reflection of primitive thinking.

IV. DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

The results of this study are particularly relevant for researchers in the field of language space online discourse. The world language situation and the reflection of the language map of the world in the virtual space are very important for corpus studies, in the framework of which the conclusions of our research can be taken into account. When compiling language buildings and their integration into the virtual space, it is important to take into account the mentality of each language, its political influence, advantage among users. We must look for new ways and developments to avoid the standardization of frequent speech errors of Internet users.

References

[1] Alpatov, V.M. What is language policy? // World of the Russian word. - 2003. - no. 2. - pp. 20-27

[2] Vinogradova, T. Yu. The specifics of communication on the Internet / T. Yu. Vinogradova // www.philology.ru/linguistics 1 / vinogradovat-04.htm.

[3] Gronskaya N.E. Virtual space of language policy: conflict linguistic coexistence. - Polis. Political studies. 2004. No. 6. Pp. 62-69.,

[4] Dzyaloshinsky I.M., Dzyaloshinskaya M.I. From information support to information partnership // Questions of the theory and practice of journalism. Baikal State University, 2015, Vol.4, pp. 349-365,

[5] Dzyaloshinsky I.M., Pilgun M A. Technology of a dialogue in modern media space: analysis and perspectives // Questions of the theory and practice of journalism. Baikal State University., 2014, No. 5, pp. 42-54.

[6] Mechkovskaya N.B. Social linguistics: The manual for students of humanitarian universities and high school students. M., 2000. P. 90

[7] Semenenko I.S. Globalization and sociocultural dynamics: personality, society, culture // Policy, 2003. no. 1.

[8] Tikhomirova S. Languages of the Peoples of Russia in the Internet space. Web address: http://www.belti.msk.ru/unesco/dl8.htm

[9] Language policy in the countries of Central Asia. Email: http://links-guide.ru/sprachen/politika-srednjaja-azija

[10] Bragg M. Whose English Is It, Anyway? - BBC - Radio4 - Routes of English, ser. 4 Web address: http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio4/routesofenglish/storysofar/programme4_6.shtml

[11] Crystal D. English as a Global Language. Cambridge, N.Y., 1997. P. 7.

[12] Diamond J. Death of Languages. 2002. Web address: http://www.abc.net.au/rn/scienceшss/stories/s493761.htm

[13] Fishman J. A. The New Linguistic Order // Foreign Policy, 1998, Winter. Web address: http://www.findarticles.com.cf_0/ml 181/113/53590461/print.jhtml

[14] http://www.any-language.com/anyProject/OurDocumentTranslationService.asp

[15] http://www.lernu.net/lernu.php?lingvo=ru&Referrer=Rekiamado_cxe_Guglo&ad=lernu-maj04_rul

[16] http://bits.blogs.nytimes.com/2013/06/30/disruptions-social-media-images-form-a-new-language-online/?_php=true&_type=blogs&_php=true&_type=blogs&_r=1